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The Lord's prayer

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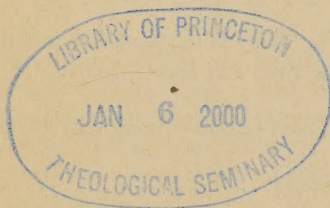


# THE LORD'S PRAYER

*A Study with Luther's Help*

By  
John W. Doberstein

*Professor of Practical Theology  
Lutheran Theological Seminary  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*



National Lutheran Council  
Division of Student Service  
327 South La Salle Street  
Chicago 4, Illinois

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# I

## THE LORD'S PRAYER AND MATURING IN PRAYER

Most of us learned to pray as children from our parents, if we learned to pray at all, and we practiced it in simple trust and naturalness. This is as it should be; but all too often our religion, and with it our notions and ways of prayer, never grows to maturity. We grow older because we cannot help it, but sometimes we refuse to grow up, especially in religion in general and prayer in particular. Religion cannot mean much until it has passed through the crucible of our own experience. Otherwise it remains second-hand or hearsay religion.

If prayer is merely an inherited habit, then it can never mean much to us or do us much good. There is a story told somewhere by John Baillie of a grown man, who, when he got into a terribly tight place and really wanted to pray with all his being, could only say, "Now I lay me down to sleep." God certainly heard that prayer and answered it in His own way, but what tragic childishness! Even though such an intellectually mature man as John Quincy Adams said that little childish prayer every day of his life, surely there is more in prayer than that!

How many college students have come away from home, perhaps for the first time, and dropped their habit of prayer? The reason may be that their prayers had been immature and mechanical, lacking reality. Leo Tolstoi tells of such an experience.

"A certain S—, a clever and veracious man, once related to me how he came to give up his belief.

"Twenty-six years ago, while he was off on a hunting expedition, he knelt down to pray before he lay down to rest, according to a habit of his from childhood. His elder brother, who was of the party, lay on some straw and watched him. When S had finished, and was preparing to lie down, his brother said to him:

"Ah, so you still keep that up?"

"Nothing more passed between them, but from that day S ceased to pray and to go to church. For thirty years S has not said a prayer, has not taken the communion, has not been in church,—not because he shared the convictions of his brother, or even knew them,—not because he had come to any conclusions of his own,—but because his brother's words were like the push of a finger against a wall ready to tumble over with its own weight."<sup>1</sup>

1. Tolstoi, Leo, *My Confession*; quoted in Bonnell, J. S., *Psychology for Pastor and People*, Harper and Brothers, New York.

College students may know a lot about history, economics, science, mathematics, and politics, but their education at best has perhaps been woefully lacking in religious things. It is frequently said today that college students, like most modern adults, are religiously illiterate. And real prayer, a regular, ordered, disciplined communing with God, and habitual practice that governs and penetrates the whole of life, is not something we simply inherit. It must be learned. It takes slow, patient learning. It will take at least as much thought and care and attention as you give your mathematics or English or history. Otherwise it will likely be only a puerile patter or a problem.

### **The Study of Prayer**

Prayer calls for thought, concentration, endurance, strength of will. Luther said, "It is impossible to say how hard a thing it is to pray with the heart." "Prayer is the hardest of all works, a labor above all labor, so that he who prays must struggle valiantly against the doubt and the grumbling which are aroused by the lack of faith and the unworthiness which we feel within us." Of course it is hard. Browning wrote, "How very hard it is to be a Christian;" and we ought to mistrust instinctively anything that is too easy, for we may be sure that what costs nothing is worth precisely what it costs.

Prayer is something to be practiced and enjoyed, not primarily a subject of study. But the study of prayer can help us to understand its deep implications, to realize its place in the Christian life, and it can give us some instruction in how to pray. This study does not pretend to cover the whole subject. A list of books at the end of this booklet will give some leads to those who desire more guidance. We propose here to take the "model prayer," given by our Lord in response to His disciples' request that He teach them to pray as He did, and to study its form and content that it may deepen our understanding and our practice of all our prayer, private and corporate.

### **Luther and the Lord's Prayer**

The great scholar, Friedrich Heiler, in his book, *Prayer*, said of Martin Luther, "After Jeremiah, Jesus, and Paul, the German reformer is indeed the most powerful among the eminent men who had a genius for prayer." It should be worthwhile to consider the testimony of such a man. And to Luther, the great preacher, the great prophet, and the great man of prayer, the Lord's Prayer was the pinnacle and ideal of all prayer. He put it clearly and definitely in the very center of the Christian prayer life and consequently he wrote about it frequently. Besides hundreds of incidental references throughout his works, he wrote no less than six extended expositions of the Lord's Prayer.<sup>2</sup> And seldom has anyone in all Christian history spoken of this divine prayer with such powerful, penetrating simplicity and profundity as did Luther. These are some of his estimates of the Lord's Prayer:

"The Lord's Prayer is my prayer."

"The Lord's Prayer is the highest, noblest, and best prayer; all other

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2. See bibliography.



prayers which do not contain or comprehend the content and intention of this prayer are untrustworthy."

"There is no nobler prayer to be found on earth than the Lord's Prayer which we daily pray, because it has this excellent testimony that God loves to hear it, which we ought not to surrender for all the riches of the world." (*Large Catechism*)

"Since this prayer had its origin with our Lord, it is without doubt the highest, noblest, and best prayer, for if this devout, faithful Schoolmaster had known a better one, He would have taught it to us."

"Here we find all needs and distresses comprehended in seven successive articles or petitions, which never cease to pertain to us, and each is so great that it ought to constrain us to pray and plead the same all our lives." (*Large Catechism*)

"A Christian will have prayed more than enough when he has prayed the Lord's Prayer aright."

### Hard to Learn

But the Lord's Prayer is not easy to pray aright. Its words are swift and few (Carlyle called it "that brief grand prayer") and we all know it by rote, but we still may not "know" it. It may take a lifetime to pray it perfectly. "The Lord's Prayer," said Dr. Gore, "is the type and mould of all Christian prayer . . . Understand the Lord's Prayer, and you understand altogether how to pray as a Christian should. It is not really an exaggeration to say that the climax of Christian growth is to have thoroughly learned to say the Lord's Prayer in the spirit of Him who first spoke it." And Frederick Maurice remarked that it "may be committed to memory quickly, but it is slowly learnt by heart."

### Difficulties

It is hard to learn, in the first place, because it contains so much. A child can begin to understand it, but the wisest cannot exhaust its depth for, if rightly used, it grows as we grow and we never outgrow it. "A friend once found a devout woman with her Bible open before her, and asked, 'What are you doing?' 'I am learning the Lord's Prayer,' was the answer. 'What!' said the friend, 'have you never learned the Lord's Prayer?' The woman, wise in spiritual things, replied, 'No, I have only gotten as far as the third petition, and I am trying to learn that.'"<sup>3</sup>

New experiences deepen its meaning and its growing meaning sheds new light on every new experience. The seven petitions sweep the whole range of the Christian faith and only a study and experience of the whole Gospel will reveal its deepest meanings for our own lives, the life of the Church, and the life of all men. That is why Luther, the great Christian, the man of faith, is such a sure guide to the meaning of the Lord's Prayer. Therefore his words, from the Large and Small Catechisms and his other writings, will appear frequently in this study.

3. Ibid, pp. 20f.  
Philadelphia, Pa. 1902.

A second difficulty, common to all prayer, but especially acute when we are repeating the Lord's Prayer, is inattention and wandering thoughts. It is psychologically impossible to concentrate one's thoughts upon one thing for an extended period of time, and Luther was therefore wise in saying, "Let your prayers be brief, but frequent and strong." Concentration requires that we summon our will power, but we need not be discouraged if we do not fully succeed at first. Dr. Gossip records the difficulty that even a resolute pray-er encountered.

"George Morrison, who became so notable a preacher, once while still a young minister, told me that, the night before, his mind had been so vagrant and unruly at his private devotions that he determined not to rise up from his knees till he had not merely said, but prayed, the Lord's Prayer through, putting some real meaning into each separate phrase of it; and that ten times his mind evaded him, and slipt through his guard; and only at the eleventh attempt did he succeed in praying that short prayer from its beginning to its end."<sup>4</sup>

A third difficulty, similar to the second, is its familiarity. Perhaps with no other prayer are we so tempted to say words and mean nothing. An old Latin proverb says, "It is often an evil thing to accustom one's self to things which are good." A devout deacon was once disturbed because his neighbor used so much profanity in his speech. He chided him for it and the neighbor's reply was: "O well, deacon, you know how it is. You pray a good deal and I swear a good deal, but neither of us means much by it." We know the words so well that we utter them while our minds are "going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it," thinking of something else.

Again and again we have been warned against mechanical prayer; first by our Lord Himself. "Do not pray by idle rote like pagans, for they suppose they will be heard the more they say; you must not copy them" (Matthew 6:7,8—Moffatt). And Luther repeatedly stressed the essential inwardness of prayer.

"Praying is not just reading out a number of Psalms" or "mumbling or intoning a sackful of words."

"The fewer words the better the prayer, the more words the worse the prayer."

"A true pray-er carefully thinks through every word and thought from the beginning to the end of the prayer."

"Prayer, if it is to be a good prayer, demands the heart sincerely, wholly, solely."

Every Christian is always in danger of reducing to a dead form this divine prayer which is spirit and life and which brings to a burning focus the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. It is a *form* of prayer, but it is even more a *norm*, a pattern, a model; and our Lord obviously did not intend that we should recite it in parrot fashion.

4. Gossip, Arthur John, *The Secret Place of the Most High*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. 1947, p. 34f.



## “Martyring” the Prayer

Luther said that “the Lord’s Prayer is the greatest martyr, for everybody tortures and abuses it.” He was thinking of the abuse of the Lord’s Prayer in his own time, perhaps especially of the danger of thoughtlessly babbling it while praying through the rosary. This mechanization of prayer, still practiced and, apparently, encouraged in the Roman Church today, where its repetition with the Ave Maria is assigned as a penance, so emptied it of meaning that we get our word “patter” from the rapid mumbling of the Pater Noster. Nothing was more hateful to Luther than such a dead thing which is only a miserable caricature of the Apostle’s admonition to pray without ceasing. It was to stop such an abuse that he wrote the explanations of the petitions in the third part of the Small Catechism and in the Large Catechism gave to pastors more extended directions for teaching the right use of the Lord’s Prayer.

Since Luther’s day, we Protestants no longer pray the Lord’s Prayer with a rosary, but we do use it in every service of worship; we pray it at baptisms, marriages, funerals, the Lord’s Supper, and very generally in our private devotions. The danger that we shall make a martyr of it is always present. Which of us has not caught himself saying the words without praying the thoughts of these petitions?

This study, therefore, attempts, with the help of Luther’s expositions, to provide in meditations upon the phrases and petitions of the Prayer a simple and, we hope, very practical aid to an understanding of the full import of every word in it. We must understand its content and then make it our own, the prayer of our own hearts. Jesus did not give us this prayer as a hard and fast formula, implying that all our prayers be expressed in just these words. He was concerned that we should pray, as He said, “after this manner.” It is more important to understand the Lord’s Prayer and make it the pattern upon which to frame our own prayers than it is to recite it as it stands.

## In His Name

It is *the* prayer that is in accord with His will in content and form and therefore it may always be prayed *in His Name*. To pray the Lord’s Prayer in spirit and truth and understanding is to pray “in the Name of Christ.” Some may have the childish notion that praying in His Name means simply to add to our own prayers the words: “through Jesus Christ our Lord.” To pray in His Name means rather to pray with the “mind of Christ,” expressing His wishes and intentions. When we do this, as Luther says, “we climb up [to God] upon His back,” and this at once excludes everything improper and foolish. You will not learn to pray from this model prayer until the objective is changed into the subjective, until its words are changed into feelings and desires, into a strong and secret movement of the heart to God, so that the deepest wishes of your heart are poured into the words of this prayer and you pray it as though it were your own. “It is the prayer you



would want to offer if you loved God with all your heart, and you may learn to love Him with all your heart if you realize what this prayer means, and try to enter into it. Never let it become for you an empty formula.”<sup>5</sup>



### A Prayer

Help us, dear Father in heaven, to pray to Thee aright. Help us, that our prayers may be no mere forms of words, but the true voice of hopes and desires which Thou Thyself hast put into our hearts. Help us, when we pray, that we may realize Thy greatness, goodness, kindness, love. Help us to the simplicity of faith. Help us to put away all selfishness from hearts and minds. Help us to freedom from all vain imaginings of merit. Help us to give praise and thanks to Thee alone. For Thine, not ours, O Father, is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

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5. Temple, William, *Christian Faith and Life*, Macmillan Company, New York. 1931, p. 111.

## II

### THE ADDRESS:—"OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN"

"When ye pray," said Jesus, "say, Our Father which art in heaven." The words of Jesus are pregnant words, words of such brevity, sureness, clearness, depth, simplicity, comprehensiveness, that again and again as you find them in the Gospels they gather up in a single word or phrase His whole view of God and man and the world. So it is with the Lord's Prayer and almost every word in it. "A few shining sentences, wet with the tears of the human race, it tells all that we know, or need to know, finding that the meaning and mystery of life is God."<sup>1</sup>

And so it is with the words, "Our Father." St. Anselm, the great medieval theologian, once assured a small boy, who had been set to recite the Lord's Prayer and wept because he could remember only the first two words, it was enough to know these. Criticizing a sermon, a man protested, "I don't want any doctrine; the religion of the 'Our Father' is enough for me." He did not realize that in those two words are at least three doctrines: I believe in God; I believe that God is my Father; I believe that God is not only my God but the God of all men and that therefore I must share my belief with others and am a member of a great family. "In a word," said Richard Sibbes, "the word *Father* is an epitome of the whole Gospel."

### Prayer Is Not Mood

When we speak to other persons we begin by addressing them; so the beginning of every prayer is an address. We address a Person. Prayer is not an emotional haze before the Infinite. It is not merely "intense soul-emotion, intense aspiration." It is not merely self-examination, something inside of *you*, *your* thoughts, desires, emotions. It is not even an intellectual belief in the reality of a personal God.

Screwtape, the devil, knows that "a vaguely devotional *mood* in which real concentration of will and intelligence have no part"<sup>2</sup> is not prayer. He knows that prayer which is only soliloquy, a speaking of ourselves to ourselves, even though it may be very "spiritual" and mystical, is not prayer to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He counsels Wormwood, his apprentice devil,

"Keep his mind on the inner life. He thinks his conversion is something *inside* him and his attention is therefore chiefly turned at present to the states of his own mind—or rather to that very expurgated version of them which is all you should allow him to see. Encourage this . . . We have means of rendering the prayers innocuous. Make sure they are always very 'spiritual.'"<sup>3</sup>

1. Newton, Joseph F., *Where Are We in Religion?* Macmillan Company, New York. 1945, p. 43.

2. Lewis, C. S., *The Screwtape Letters*, Macmillan Company, New York. 1943, pp. 24f.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 20f.

## Prayer Is Personal Contact

Prayer is rather a meeting, an encounter, a direct, inner contact between persons. It is a communion, a conversation, a personal relationship. It is not merely "saying prayers," but really speaking and hearing. It is an actual, vital, magnetic contact between an "I" and a "Thou." The "Thou" is the God who is a Person, not a theoretical, abstract, impersonal Principle. God is not a proposition in mathematics. He is not to be studied and observed objectively as you study a fact, or theory, or thing; He is a Person who meets you and speaks and acts. You meet Him in a living awareness,"<sup>4</sup> involving the whole "I" in feeling, will, and thought. This God of ours is no nonentity, content to be acknowledged intellectually and then ignored. He is not a vague power, meaningless, purposeless, inarticulate. He is a Person who "stands over against us," in a relationship which calls for decision and response, a relationship which is "existential" because our whole existence as persons depends upon it. In Christian prayer you are not in contact with a thing, but a personal being, a "Thou" who addresses *you*.

## Prayer Is Response

Therefore, to pray means that God speaks to us and we speak to God "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend."<sup>5</sup> You take Him in earnest; you speak to Him as really as you speak to a member of your family, a friend, or any other person. All men have a relationship with God; all men depend upon Him utterly. He is there, absolute and inescapable, whether they like it or not, and ultimately all will have to deal with Him. But in prayer we enter into a *decisive* relationship with Him. And we enter that relationship or fellowship because He has first spoken to us. He has spoken to us through Christ, Who is therefore called the Word of God.

## Prayer Is Faith

So prayer is my response to a definite revelation, a definite Word of God. He spoke that Word to us in Christ and God's forgiveness and grace give us the right to pray. God always makes the first move; He first loved us, and Jesus Christ is the presupposition of Christian prayer.

Therefore in prayer we must first be ready to listen to the revealed Word of God. True prayer can only come out of faith and Christian faith is present only where the Word of God has spoken to us.<sup>6</sup> In Jesus Christ the Lord God has made Himself known as the *Father* who loves us, and whenever this Word comes to us and is accepted by us, then we stand in a relationship of faith. Then we have someone to whom we can go in prayer; then we pray in the Name of Jesus. In other words, as this applies to the Lord's Prayer, Jesus is here teaching us to address God as our Father. He is saying, "God is treating you as sons."<sup>7</sup>

Luther's explanation of The Introduction of the Lord's Prayer in the Small Catechism expresses with keen insight this close connection between

4. Farmer, H. H., *The World and God*, Harper and Brothers, New York. 1935, p. 13.

5. Exodus 33:11. Cf. Genesis 18:16 ff.

6. Luther.

7. Hebrews 12:7, R.S.V.



faith and prayer. "God thereby tenderly encourages us to *believe* that He is truly our Father; and that we are truly His children, so that we may *boldly and confidently* come to Him in prayer, even as beloved children come to their dear father." And Emil Brunner, a living theologian, shows how much he has learned from Luther when he says:

"Prayer is really nothing but faith. So much prayer—so much faith. So little prayer—so little faith. In prayer it appears whether a man is daring enough to believe that God is really our Father. That is trust in God. And in prayer it also appears whether a man is humble enough to surrender all to God and to look for all things from Him."

And the following graphic words from the same teacher sum up the meaning of prayer as the response of faith to the living God who first speaks to us:

"As children lost in a woods are fearful of the sinister darkness—and then, suddenly, hearing a sound from the sombre darkness, a familiar voice, a loving, seeking, helping voice, their mother's voice—so prayer is our reply to the voice from the Word of God in Jesus Christ which suddenly cries out to us in the mysterious, dark universe. It is the Father calling us out of the world's darkness. He calls us, seeks us, wants to bring us to Himself. 'Where are you, my child?' Our prayers mean 'Here I am, Father. I was afraid until you called. Since you have spoken, I am afraid no longer. Come, I am waiting for you, take me, lead me by the hand through the dark terrifying world.'"<sup>8</sup>

Until you can say you have had this encounter of faith, it is questionable whether your prayers are real contacts with God. A young person is quoted as having said: "The other day I was saying my prayers and all of a sudden I knew that God was listening, and that He loved me, and was glad I was speaking to Him, and that I could trust Him always."

### The Father

Let us examine the word "Father" a bit. John Henry Newman once said that nothing is easier than to say "God" and mean nothing by it. But the word "Father" is deeply meaningful; it is a description which few are too young and none too old to understand and appreciate. God has revealed Himself in many ways. From time immemorial men knew that He was the Almighty, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent, the Holy One, the Eternal. But He became our *Father* through Jesus Christ, revealing the inmost essence of His being, telling us that He is *love*, fatherly love in the highest sense of that term, and that He wills to be in this relationship to *us*. Jesus does not use the word "Lord" which suggests the relation of servant and master. Nor does he use the word "God," which is an abstract idea and suggests nothing to many people. But the word "Father" every man can understand, the child, the ignorant, the savage. Luther summed it up this way:

"There is no name among all names that makes us more fit to stand before God than 'Father.' It is an altogether friendly, sweet, profound,

8. Brunner, Emil, *Our Faith*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. 1936, p. 111, 113.

and cordial word. It would not be so loving and comforting were we to say 'Lord' or 'God' or 'Judge.' For the name 'Father' is by its nature inborn in us and naturally sweet. Therefore it pleases God above all other names and moves Him to hear us, because when we use it we declare ourselves to be the children of God."

Thomas Wolfe, the American novelist, who died before his search had found its goal, has some true but wistful words to say of the longing in men's hearts for this revelation.

"The deepest search in life, it seemed to me, the thing that in one way or another was central to all living, was man's search for a father, not merely the father of his flesh, not merely the lost father of his youth, but the image of a strength and wisdom external to his need and superior to his hunger, to which the belief and power of his own life could be united."<sup>9</sup>

But Thomas Wolfe looked in the wrong place and so never found the Father and life for him remained an "incommunicable prison." Men's search for the Father finds its answer only if they listen to Him speaking through His Word, which is Jesus Christ. When Jesus bids men to use this name, He is saying, not only that God "is truly our Father," but also bidding them to *become* His children. He is saying, "God wills to be your Father. Through *Me* He can become your Father." We become *reconciled* children, obedient, faithful, loving children of God, through Jesus Christ. This is the one, sound basis for our prayer, for we have no merit or worthiness to call Him Father except through the merit and mediation of His Son.

### Our Father

Observe next that this address reads "Our Father," not "My Father." At the very outset Jesus corrects an old but ever new perversion of human prayer—selfishness. He immediately lifts our prayer out of the realm of the ego and it becomes not only a personal prayer, but also a common prayer. And because it is a common prayer it becomes an intercession for all God's children, the reconciled and the unreconciled. To say "our Father" compels us to recognize our brotherhood and it reminds us of the duty of intercession: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Luther writes,

"Christ does not permit each one to pray for himself alone, but rather for the whole gathering of all men. For He teaches us to say, not 'my Father,' but 'our Father.' This prayer is a common spiritual possession; therefore no one should be deprived of it, not even enemies. For since He is the Father of us all, He desires that we should be brothers to one another, love one another, pray for one another, as well as for ourselves."

When we stand before the Father we do not stand alone and isolated, each one for himself. Innumerable brethren all over the world are standing or kneeling beside us. All who bear the name of Christ, whatever their denominational name may be, pray this prayer in common, and all the dissensions and disagreements which have stained the Church's history cannot

9. Johnson, Pamela Hansford, *Hungry Guilliver, An English Critical Appraisal of Thomas Wolfe*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. 1948, p. 153.

break the bond that this prayer makes between all who believe in Christ. Says Luther: "The Lord's Prayer binds the people together and to one another, in that one prays for the other and with the other, and therefore it becomes strong and powerful, so that it dispels all evils and even death itself."<sup>10</sup> Luther would say that we martyr the Lord's Prayer when we pray it for ourselves alone.

A prayer of Luther for brotherly love might be called his ecumenical prayer.

"It is Thy will that we not only call Thee Father, but that all of us together call Thee *our* Father, and thus offer our prayers with one accord for all: Grant us, therefore, brotherly love and unity, that we may know and think of one another as true brethren and sisters, and pray to Thee, our one common Father, for all men and for every man, even as one child prays for another to its father. Let no one among us seek his own things or forget before Thee the things of others; but, all hatred, envy and dissension laid aside, may we love one another as good and true children of God, and thus say with one accord not 'my Father,' but '*our* Father.'"<sup>11</sup>

### The Heavenly Father

Finally, note the words "in heaven." The word "Father" reveals infinite love; the words "in heaven" reveal His infinite power and holiness. The word "Father" shows how like He is to an earthly father, how near and tender. The words "in heaven" show how unlike us He is. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8,9). He is the great Creator and God of the universe. He is the Ruler and Governor of vast, unimaginable infinities of space beyond the farthest stars to be made visible by Mt. Palomar's telescope. But just because He is the Creator and Lord of this infinite universe, holding these dizzying distances in the hollow of His hand and guiding billions upon billions of stars and constellations, He and only He can know and hear and answer the cries of all His creatures. "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). The word "heaven" gives us a standard by which we may measure how great a gift it is that we may call Him "Father." This is not, as Thomas Hardy would say, a "nonchalant universe;" it is the Father's world. The materialist can only be overwhelmed by the mystery of the universe; he cries out with the Bolshevik poet, "Enough of the sky and the strangeness of things! Give us more plain nails!" But we do not speak to the unheeding sky or to a strange vacuum; we speak to the *Father* Who is in heaven.

But the word "heaven" also reminds us that He is a holy God, and this

10. Smith, Preserved and Gallinger, Herbert, *Conversations with Luther, Selections from . . . the Table Talk*, Pilgrim Press, 1915, p. 239.

11. From "A Brief Explanation of the Ten Commandments, The Creed, and The Lord's Prayer" (1520). *Works of Martin Luther*, Philadelphia, 1915, Vol. II, p. 375.



should make us humble that we may not sin against Him. And this leads to the first petition in which we pray, "Hallowed be Thy Name."



### A Prayer

O God, Who dost lovingly persuade us to believe that Thou art truly our Father and that we are Thy children indeed: Grant that with all cheerfulness and confidence we may bring our requests to Thee, even as dear children to their dear father; through Jesus Christ, Thy only begotten Son, our Lord. Amen.

### III

#### THE FIRST PETITION:—"HALLOWED BE THY NAME"

Before we study this petition and those following, we should first observe the order in which they come. The pronouns are important! Note that in the first three petitions the pronoun "Thy" is central and not until the fourth petition do the pronouns "us" and "our" appear. Far from being insignificant, this is a fact of primary importance. The Lord's Prayer teaches us the *right* order in which to rank the objects of prayer, for we always tend to adopt the wrong order.

#### Praying the Lord's Prayer Backwards

In 1519 Luther wrote a little essay entitled "The Lord's Prayer Said Forwards and Backwards,"<sup>1</sup> which we may attempt to summarize.

The Lord's Prayer, says Luther, can be prayed both "forwards" and "backwards." It is prayed "forwards" when men pray it as it is, praying first for the hallowing of God's Name, the coming of God's kingdom, and the doing of God's will. It is prayed "backwards" when, in their hearts, if not with their lips, they begin with the seventh petition. "Such persons seek their own honor, name, and glory rather than the glory of God." They want deliverance from evil and temptations in order that they may live in happiness and good fortune. And even when they come to the first three petitions, they still think of nothing but themselves, but "rather seek and desire, above all things, their own name, their own kingdom or supremacy, and their own will." "In order, therefore, that we may not for selfish reasons seek the kingdom of God, the hallowing of God's Name is put first; so that we are to pray for our salvation and the coming of God's kingdom, not to the end that it may be well with us, but that the name, honor, and glory of God may be praised and magnified."

"It is therefore well worth noting that the first three petitions contain the word 'Thy,' and those that follow contain the words 'us' and 'our.' This is intended to teach us to seek and desire first of all God's honor, kingdom, and will, and only thereafter the things that pertain to ourselves."

#### God First

The Bible begins with the words, "In the beginning, God," and so, too, does the spirit of the Lord's Prayer. Think of the Ten Commandments; the first three turn our minds to God and our relation to Him, and the remaining commandments give guidance for our ordinary earthly conduct. So the Lord's Prayer puts God first and our desires and concerns second. Humanistic

1. This can be found in a valuable little collection of Luther's writings now unfortunately out of print: Steinhäuser, Albert T. W., *Luther Primer. A Little Book of Goodly Excerpts from the Writings of Martin Luther*, Survey Publishing Co., Columbia, S. C., 1917, pp. 13-16.

religion starts with man and tries to climb up to God under its own power, but the Christian religion starts with God and then penetrates the whole life of man. It is "theocentric." This means that in prayer the person who matters is not myself but God. Prayer is not in the first instance a means of getting something for myself or my friends or the world. It is a means of establishing, strengthening, confirming a relationship with God. Many other things follow from that; everything else does; but that comes first! The man who makes God's glory, God's will, and God's kingdom entirely the purpose and aim of his life is the man who will have his life truly oriented. All other things fall into their right place when God is given His right place. Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Our Lord would have these words apply to prayer.

### **The Meaning of the "Name"**

We have seen that prayer is meeting and speaking with a Person. In the Bible and in the history of religions all over the world the "name" is synonymous with the "person." In the primitive religions to know the name of a god was to be able to exercise power through it. The idea is distorted in magic and superstition, but it is nevertheless a reality; for to this day the "name" of a person signifies power. If you speak in the name of a king, you act as the king himself. And to call someone by name is to know him. So the Father in heaven upon whom we call is not "the unknown God." He has revealed Himself and made Himself known. The "name" of God is a concise Biblical expression for the revealed character of God, a summing up of His personality as He has made it known. As Dr. Gore says:

"The name of God in the Bible means . . . God Himself as He is manifested. God has shown Himself to man; He has spelt out His great name, letter by letter, syllable by syllable, before the eyes of men or into their hearts, in nature, in conscience, by the voice of His prophets and in Jesus Christ His Son."<sup>2</sup>

### **The Meaning of "Hallow"**

We love God as our Father but we stand in awe and fear of the great Creator in His power and holiness. "Love and dread are brethren," says Juliana of Norwich, and for Luther "fear and love" are the motivation of obedience to each of the Ten Commandments. In both the Old Testament and the New Testament the word "holy" means "separateness;" anything that is set apart was called "holy;" it was consecrated or dedicated to God. So holiness in God means that He is separate in splendor and fearful in power, righteousness, and purity. He is set apart from us; the Creator is set apart from His creatures. He demands integrity, wholeness, holiness in us. "Ye shall be holy: for I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). He is the holy God Who lays heavy demands upon us. You will not approach this Creator, of awful majesty and glory, with easy, careless familiarity.

To hallow the Name of God, therefore, means to separate ourselves, to turn away from self and self-centeredness, from sin and wrong, and to

2. Gore, Charles, *The Sermon on the Mount. A Practical Exposition*, London, John Murray, 1912, p. 129.



worship, adore, and reverence Him by exalting His love and purpose in our lives. It is to be moved to willing obedience by awe, reverence, adoration, and love for God's purpose and character as He has revealed it in His Word. "God's Name is indeed holy in itself," says Luther in the Small Catechism, "but we pray in this petition that it may be hallowed also among us." We cannot do this by our own will or strength unless God helps by His Spirit, so in this petition Jesus is teaching us to pray for God's help to keep His Name holy; He is teaching us to dedicate ourselves to God. And this will manifest itself in at least three ways: (1) in our words, (2) in our life and conduct, and (3) in the proclaiming of His Word.

### **In Our Words**

This petition quite naturally reminds us, as it did Luther, of the Second Commandment: "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain." And Luther's explanation of this Commandment gives us a lead toward understanding what it means to hallow God's Name in the words we speak.

"We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, conjure, lie, or deceive, by His Name, but call upon Him in every time of need, and worship Him with prayer, praise, and thanksgiving."

Clearly, in this first petition we are praying that what is demanded and required of us in the Second Commandment may become a reality in us and among us. In other words, we hallow God's Name (1) by not abusing it and (2) by using it aright.

Not much need be said of the abuse of God's Name, such as cursing and swearing, except that we are often inclined to take too superficial a view of it and condone it as a harmless, thoughtless way of expressing oneself. We forget the penetrating insight of Jesus when He said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34) and "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man" (Matthew 15:11). The utterance of profane words and the careless or intentional use of even such seemingly harmless expletives as "My God!" reveal that underneath there is little or no realization of God's holiness. If we know the God who is holy love, we cannot ask Him to "damn" anybody. If we have in our souls any awe and fear of that which is holy, and therefore take seriously the awfulness of that which is its opposite, we cannot wish "hell" upon any man. We are always in danger of losing our sense of God as Holy, Holy, Holy. We pray, then, in this petition, that we may think God's thoughts after Him and speak as befits the sons of a holy God.

But Luther's explanation stresses the positive side of the Second Commandment and of this petition: "worship Him with prayer, praise, and thanksgiving." We pray that God would make Himself great and holy in us so that we cannot help speaking out His praise and glory in our own hearts and in common worship. Praise of God is a necessary part of every

prayer, for this is the *one* thing we *can* give to Him. As Luther says:

“God’s honor is the first, the last, and the highest that we can give to Him, and He asks and requires no more than this. After all, we cannot give Him anything else, for He gives us every other possession we have. Honor, however, He retains for Himself alone, in order that we may acknowledge, say, live, work, and bear witness by all that we do and do not do that all things are God’s.”

### **In Our Life**

The content of this first petition is still not exhausted; it contains more than this reference to the fulfillment of the Second Commandment. We praise God and hallow His Name, not only in words, but with our whole life. And where do we learn how our life is to be formed in accord with God’s will? In God’s Word, in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. So Luther says in the Small Catechism that we rightly hallow God’s Name:

“when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity and we, as God’s children, lead holy lives in accordance with it. This grant us, dear Father in heaven! But whoever teaches and lives otherwise than as God’s Word teaches, profanes the Name of God among us. From this preserve us, heavenly Father!”

Christians are those who are dedicated and consecrated to a new way of life, a life which is Christ’s way. We have been baptized; we bear the Name of God; therefore we must lead lives consistent with that Name. Says Luther in the Large Catechism:

“Since in this prayer we call God our Father, it is our duty always to deport and demean ourselves as godly children, that we may not live to His shame, but to His honor and praise . . . For just as it is a shame and disgrace to a natural father to have a bad, ruined child that opposes him in words and deeds, so that on its account he suffers reproach and contempt; so also it brings dishonor upon God if we, who are called by His Name and have all manner of goods from Him, teach, speak, and live in any other manner except as godly and heavenly children, that He may hear it said of us that we cannot be the children of God, but must rather be the children of the devil.” We pray, then, in this petition, for God’s help to lead holy lives.

### **In the Preaching of the Gospel**

Lastly, we hallow God’s Name in the proclaiming of the Gospel, the preaching of the Word of Christ. Luther’s explanation points out that God’s Name is hallowed “when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity.” When you say “Hallowed be Thy Name,” you are praying for your pastor and all the preachers and teachers of the Church. You acknowledge that *true* preachers of the Gospel are a gift of God. You pray that the gospel may be preached everywhere “in its truth and purity.” It is often preached “otherwise;” there is wrong teaching and this is to profane God’s Name. So he who prays this petition beseeches the heavenly Father to guard him and all men from being taught “otherwise.” He and He alone can preserve His

Word in its truth and purity. Thus Luther again lifts this prayer above the merely personal sphere and makes it the concern of the whole Church, the whole fellowship.

Thus we pray in this first petition that God's Name may be hallowed, (1) in our *words*, (2) through our *lives*, and (3) through the *true preaching and teaching of His Word*. As a final practical suggestion for your meditation as you use this model prayer, remember another threefold thought: The Name of God must be hallowed by me in my life; through me in my immediate environment; and by all Christians throughout the world.



### A Prayer

O God, Whose Name is holy of itself: We pray that it may be hallowed also by us. To this end help us, O blessed Father in heaven, that Thy Word may be taught in truth and purity, and that we, as Thy children, may lead holy lives in accordance with it; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.





## IV

### THE SECOND AND THIRD PETITIONS: — "THY KINGDOM COME; THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN."

The first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer are so closely related that the fulfillment of one is also the fulfillment of the other two. This close connection has been succinctly stated by one of the best of New Testament scholars among Lutherans, Dr. H. Offermann:

"Standing before God as His children we realize that our will must be one with His will. What is His will? His will is the coming of His kingdom. The second petition is therefore the center of the first three petitions, and it determines the meaning of the other two. God's kingdom is God's reign and rule on earth. When His kingdom comes, His Name will be hallowed, it will be kept holy by all, and His will, His good and gracious will, which means our redemption and salvation, will be done on earth as it is in heaven, so that God will be all in all."<sup>1</sup>

It may also be said that the third petition is a definition of the second petition. We shall therefore study them together.

#### **What Is the Kingdom of God?**

We ask first, what is the kingdom of God? Many a person, if asked what he was praying for when he prayed this second petition, would be at a loss to give a clear answer. And even the theologians have not been at one in stating its precise and definite meaning. It is worthwhile, therefore, to mention in very general terms some of the answers that have been given because they are still to be met with in Christian thinking today.

Some say that the kingdom of God belongs to the future; it is Christ's future rule on earth after the present age has ended, when Satan's rule will be finally defeated and God will rule all.

Others say that the kingdom of God is not anything visible in the world and humanity, but something that takes place only in the individual soul, when Christ rules and God dwells in the soul.

Others have identified it with the "City of God," defining it as God's government in the history of mankind over against the kingdom of Satan. Sometimes this has led to the cross view which asserts that the visible Church is the embodiment of the kingdom and identifies this Church with the Roman Church.

Still others define it as the theocratic state, where Church and State would be one and the same and men would be ruled by the laws of the Bible.

1. *New Testament Commentary*, ed. Alleman, H. C., Muhlenberg Press, 1936, p. 174.

And still others say it is the community of all people who work for the goal of love in the world. And many in more recent times, who have taught the "social gospel," say the kingdom is social, that it is realized to the extent that bad moral and social conditions are removed by the efforts of men of good will; an ethical social order in accord with the will of God.

There is no precise definition of the kingdom of God in the New Testament. Jesus speaks of it frequently; indeed, it is the central idea of His teaching, but He gives us only descriptions and vivid glimpses of it without defining it. However, the pictures Jesus paints in the parables of the kingdom of God, especially the parables of the Sower, the Leaven, the Pearl and the Treasure in the field (Matthew 13), give us a clear idea of it. In all these parables the emphasis is upon God's kingdom of grace coming to us. It is our conviction, however, that Luther, who was following St. Paul, has preserved for us the essential teaching concerning the kingdom of God which is true to the teaching of the New Testament. Asking the question, what is the kingdom of God? Luther answers in the Large Catechism.

"Nothing else than what we learned in the Creed, that God sent His Son Jesus Christ our Lord into the world to redeem and deliver us from the power of the devil, and to bring us to Himself, and to govern us as a King of righteousness, life and salvation against sin, death, and an evil conscience. And besides He has given us His Holy Spirit, to apply the same to us by His holy Word, and to illumine and strengthen us by His power in the faith."

For Luther, therefore, the essential meaning of the kingdom of God is to be found in the second and third articles of the Creed.<sup>2</sup> For him, as for the New Testament, the kingdom is neither the Roman Church nor an earthly kingdom of God set up in the present by outward means. It is purely spiritual and religious. In its simplest terms, it is the reign of God, where God is King, that is, where He is both Lord and Father at the same time. It is where His will is done, where His love reigns, where His grace and gifts are given to us.

But His grace comes only through Christ. Therefore the kingdom of God is wherever Christ rules through the Word in the hearts of men. This Word is primarily the message of the forgiveness of sins. The kingdom, then, is in every person who receives in faith the message of forgiveness of sins through Christ. It is the inner state of the soul that lives in faith, in forgiveness, peace, salvation, and new life. Luther calls it the kingdom of grace.

"God's kingdom is a kingdom of righteousness and truth, of which Christ says: Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. What is the righteousness of God or of His kingdom? It is when there is no more sin in us and all our body, strength and power is subject to God and devoted to His service, so that we can say with Paul, 'I live,

2. Here it may be helpful to study again these articles of the Creed and Luther's explanations in the *Small Catechism*.



yet not I, but Christ liveth in me' (Gal. 2:20). As he said to the Corinthians, 'Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price' (I Cor. 6:19 f.), as if he were saying, Christ has bought you by giving Himself, therefore you should belong to Him and let Him live and rule in you."

### **In Two Kingdoms**

But there is another kingdom opposed to the kingdom of God.

"It is the kingdom of the devil, whom the Lord in the Gospel calls a prince or king of this world. It is a kingdom of sin and disobedience." The children of God live in this kingdom also, until the kingdom of God comes in glory; but they live in it with a difference.

"The devout live in it in such a manner that they are daily struggling against sin and constantly and resolutely opposing the lust of the flesh, the lures of the world, and the insinuations of the devil."

The children of God, while they live in the world, live in the Spirit; and they live in the Spirit because they live in the faith that they have become the children of God through forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. And where the Holy Spirit is, there is the kingdom of God. Thus, in answer to the question, How does the kingdom of God come? Luther says in the Small Catechism:

"when our heavenly Father gives us the Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word, and live a godly life here on earth, and in heaven for ever."

The gift of the Holy Spirit is the presupposition of the coming of the rule of God in our hearts; everything depends on that. Only by the Holy Spirit can we believe in Christ and live and work in accordance with God's will.

### **The Coming Kingdom**

It is to be noted that the kingdom of God is a present reality, here and now in the world, and also something to come more fully in the future. It includes all who have the faith that they are children of God and live in fellowship with Him through Christ, and because such people exist now, the kingdom of God exists now. The kingdom is still hidden, but one day it will be revealed in glory, when we shall be like Him and see Him as He is in His glory. The kingdom began in hope, when the prophets looked forward to the coming of the Messiah; it came visibly when Christ came into the world; it came with inner power at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit gathered together the fellowship of believers; and it is marching on to the end of time when history meets its goal in God and the children of God experience in perfection what they already have in the Spirit and in Christ.

### **To Us**

"Thy kingdom come," we pray; and Luther says in the Small Catechism:

"The kingdom of God comes indeed of itself, without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may also come to us."

God's throne is established beyond the power of anyone to shake and on that throne our destiny is being decided; but we pray that His Spirit may dwell in us, that His "kingdom, now begun in us, may increase and daily grow in

power, that indifference to God's service may not overcome us and make us fall away."

In order that we may really recall that in praying this petition we are praying that God's kingdom may come "*to us*," we may well remember again these three directions: The kingdom must come to me, through me, and to all men.

Thy kingdom come *to me*, into my life. God's rule must begin in my life. I cannot pray that it come to others until I have desired it myself. I pray that He may accept me as a member of His kingdom. I pray for true faith, true love, true hope, for the gracious gifts of His kingdom, for true fellowship with Him and His Son Jesus Christ, for strength to endure, for faithfulness. I pray, above all, for the Holy Spirit, because the Spirit (and therefore the kingdom) will not come to me unless I pray for His coming.

Thy kingdom come *through me* to the people around me. We pray for our brothers and sisters, our parents, the friends we associate with, the students we live and study with, our "neighbors," remembering the responsibility we have toward them. We pray that salvation may come to them too and take root in them. And we ourselves cooperate to make this possible by our words, the evidence of our deeds, and the testimony of our whole life that we are the children of God. Paul says that we should be "laborers together with God" in His kingdom (I Cor. 3:9). If we take this to heart in our prayer we shall be assuming our rightful responsibility towards others, and this is real intercession.

Thy kingdom come *to all men* in all the world. Here our intercession swings beyond the narrow circle of our own family, immediate group, or personal contacts, where we may be tempted to pray as in the old Wessex prayer:

"God bless me and me wife,  
My son John and his wife,  
Us four:  
No more!"

The Lord's Prayer includes all men everywhere. It remembers the promise that Christ gave us in the parable of the Mustard Seed (Mark 4:30-32) and becomes a prayer for the expansion of the kingdom. Our prayer follows the missionary to those who are not yet Christians and includes the world-wide work of our church and all Christian churches. It prays that the power of the kingdom of God may prove itself to be the conqueror of enmity and hatred in the life of nations and bring peace on earth and good will to men.

Luther sums up these three directions to which this petition points in the Large Catechism:

"Therefore we pray here first that this may become effective with us, and that the Name of God be so praised through His holy Word and a Christian life that we who have accepted it may abide and daily grow therein, and that it may gain approbation and adherence among other people, proceed with power throughout the world, that many may find entrance into the kingdom of grace, be made partakers of redemption, and

be so led by the Holy Ghost that we shall forever remain altogether in a kingdom now begun."

### **The Third Petition**

"Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

"The good and gracious will of God is done indeed without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may also be done among us." Thus Luther places us directly before the face of the God whose almighty will is done in all the universe and again reminds us that we are praying that this will may be done by us men, the only ones of all His creatures whose will is free to defy and disobey his will.

Jesus bids us think of heaven as the place where there is holy, perfect fulfillment of God's will; therefore there is truth, light, life, peace, and joy in heaven. The opposite of heaven is the kingdom of evil, ruled by the will of the prince of evil; therefore it is a place of lies, darkness, death, strife, and sorrow. Between these two there is the earth, the heart of man. It is the battleground between good and evil. Here heaven and hell are mixed. Here God's will is done, but the will of the devil, the world, and the flesh is also done.

Luther says that the will of God is done:

"when God destroys and brings to naught every evil counsel and purpose of the devil, the world, and our own flesh, which would hinder us from hallowing His Name, and prevent the coming of His kingdom; and when he strengthens us and keeps us steadfast in His Word and in faith, even unto our end. This is His good and gracious will."

This puts the emphasis upon God's part in our doing of His will. He Himself does His will in us. But there is a human side also, for the citizen of the kingdom of God is not indifferent to life and conditions around him. He realizes that God's will must be done in personal relations with other men, in political, cultural, and social conditions, and he cooperates with God's will to change and improve them. So he prays God to strengthen and keep him steadfast to do His will in his earthly life and conduct. He prays for steadfast faith because faith produces good works. He prays for new life because life in Christ is like a tree that cannot help bearing good fruit. Hence, this petition may be said to emphasize not so much passive submission to, but active participation in God's will.

### **Among Us**

Think again of the three directions: May God's will be done in me, through me, and in all the world.

Thy will be done in *me*. Walter Fles, a German poet who fell in World War I, said that to pray means not to beg for pennies from God's hand, but to grip the whole hand of God. Here I submit my will to God in the spirit of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane, "Not my will but thine be done" (Luke 22:42), not in passive resignation, but as an act of strenuous spiritual energy, dedicated to the life and death struggle against the devil, the world, and my own flesh. These powers are not to be conquered merely by my good will or by summoning up noble impulses in my own will. Only by grasping the whole



hand of God, which is stronger than these powers, can I be enabled and empowered to triumph over these powers which are seeking always to take me out of God's kingdom of grace and get me under their power again. "For if their will be not broken and frustrated, the kingdom of God cannot abide upon the earth or His name be hallowed" (Large Catechism). I pray that God's will may be done in my *whole* life, for the kingdom of God is an absolute kingdom, demanding that I seek His will in my speech, my relations with others, my acts, my study, my aims, ambitions, and aspirations.

Thy will be done in others *through me*. As I commit myself, so I commit all my "neighbors" to the good and gracious will of God. My prayer, my trust, my hope is that God's will may be done in them and by them. It is not enough to trust God's will; my confident certainty of God in Christ also summons me to *do* His will. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). "A charge to keep I have." What is that charge?

"To serve the present age,  
My calling to fulfill:  
O may it all my powers engage  
To do my Master's will."

And where must I serve the present age? For you it is the place where you live and study. There we can engage all our powers to do our Master's will.

Thy will be done *by all men* in all the world. Here again our prayer lifts our horizons and we remember those beyond our narrow circle of home, college, university, nation. We think of a world of men and nations whose only hope lies in the good and gracious will of God, and we dedicate ourselves anew to work for and witness to His kingdom, knowing that true brotherhood will come only through the Gospel of Christ which makes all who believe it the children of God and therefore brethren.

"Thy will be done on earth.'  
On bended knee we pray;  
Then leave our prayer before the throne,  
And rise and go our way.

And earth is filled with woe,  
And war, and evil, still,  
For lack of men whose prayer is 'Lo,  
I come to do Thy will.'

'Thy will be done on earth.'  
Lord, grant me grace to see  
That if Thy will is to be done,  
It must be done by me."<sup>3</sup>

3. Merrill, William Pierson, *The Way*, Macmillan Company, New York, 1933, p. 107.

## Prayers

O God, everlasting Father, Whose kingdom cometh of itself, we pray that it may come also unto us. To this end do Thou give us Thy Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we may believe Thy Holy Word, and live godly lives here on earth and in heaven forever. Amen.



O God, Whose will is done without our prayer, we pray that it may be done also by us. To this end do Thou frustrate and bring to naught every evil counsel and purpose—such as the will of the devil, the world, and our own flesh—which would hinder the hallowing of Thy Name and prevent the coming of Thy kingdom. Do Thou strengthen and keep us steadfast in Thy Word and in faith even unto the end. Let this Thy good and gracious will be done. Amen.





## V

### THE FOURTH PETITION:—"GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD"

The address and first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer, the "Thy" petitions, riveted our attention upon God the Father, His glory, His kingdom, and His will. In this fourth petition, Jesus turns to the needs and concerns of our earthly life and the pronouns change to "us" and "our." First God, then ourselves. There is a saying which emphasizes this order in prayer: "Ask for great things, and the small things will be given unto you."

#### **Prayer for Material Things**

Observe that this is the only petition which prays for material things. Not only the order, but the proportion of this prayer has something to teach us. "It is just one petition out of seven. And yet so much of our lives is given to striving after the things to which Christ allows only this very small place! It has the largest place in most men's living; the smallest in the prayer that Christ has taught us. How far beyond us this Christ still is!"<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, Jesus does not make any false distinction between the soul and the body, the spiritual and the material. He did not teach a dualism which would make everything material sinful and everything spiritual good. He rather insisted that the material must be inter-penetrated and redeemed by the spiritual. He would have us recognize that material things are gifts of God and use them for our good and God's glory.

Hence He teaches us to speak to God of everything that is necessary to our support, sustenance, and well-being, as Luther says so quaintly in the Large Catechism:

"Here we are mindful of the poor breadbasket, namely, of our body and the necessities of the temporal life. It is a brief and simple word, but it is also very broad and comprehensive. For if you speak of, and pray for, daily bread, you pray for everything that is necessary in order to have and enjoy the same, and also against everything which interferes with it. Therefore, you must enlarge your thoughts and extend them afar, not only to the oven or the flour-barrel, but to the distant fields and the entire land, which bears and brings to us daily bread. For if God did not cause it to grow, and bless and preserve it in the field, we could never take bread from the oven or have any to set upon the table.

1. Jacobs, Charles M., *Helps on the Way*, United Lutheran Publication House, Philadelphia, 1933, pp. 33f.

To speak briefly, this petition includes everything that belongs to our entire life in the world. For on that account alone do we need daily bread."

The word "bread" was not always interpreted so. In the ancient church, Origen spoke of this daily bread as "heavenly," "supersubstantial" bread, and later commentators continued to interpret it in this spiritual sense. Luther, in his earlier writings, thought of it, too, as the "bread of Life," the spiritual bread of the Lord's Supper. But in the Catechisms of 1529 he turned away from this spiritualizing interpretation and defined "bread" as everything that is necessary to our earthly life and welfare.

### **The Inclusiveness of "Bread"**

What this "everything" includes, Luther summed up in the Small Catechism in words that are worth remembering both for their beauty and their solid content.

"Everything that is required to satisfy our bodily needs; such as food and raiment, house and home, fields and flocks, money and goods; pious parents, children and servants; godly and faithful rulers, good government; seasonable weather, peace and health; order and honor; true friends, good neighbors, and the like."

How inclusive is the word "bread"! It would be a spiritual education for us to think through every one of these items mentioned by Luther, weighing each word to sense its full meaning and importance, remembering how truly necessary they are to an adequate, peaceful, happy life. The food we enjoy every day without missing a meal, the clothes and shoes we wear, pleasant homes and dormitories, parents, brothers, sisters, friends, fellow students, teachers, laboratories, libraries, law and order that make it possible for us to pursue our education in peace, medicine, hospitals, doctors, a good reputation—you can go on with the list yourself. How different life would be without them or any one of them! If you have them, how many others are there who lack them in the world today!

### **The Exclusiveness of "Bread"**

Yet, though this daily "bread" includes so much, it does exclude some other things. "Jesus bids us to pray for bread. It is to be noted, however, that He does not bid us to pray for cake."<sup>2</sup> He thus excludes every covetous wish and limits us to the natural basis of life. Living in a civilization of technics and advertising which is constantly dinning it into our ears that we need a thousand and one things, we need to re-examine with a searching scrutiny our ideas of what is "necessary" in the light of the Gospel. We keep humping ourselves to obtain gadgets which not only have no real relation to the real necessities of life but are inimical to its happiness and peace. We work for them; we probably have enough insight into the Gospel to know that it is an impertinence to pray for them. Even a pagan philosopher

2. Tittle, Ernest Fremont, *The Lord's Prayer*, Abingdon-Cokesbury, Nashville, 1942, p. 80.

had that much light, according to Izaak Walton's quaint story:

"Let me tell you, Scholar, that Diogenes walked on a day, with his friend, to see a country-fair; where he saw ribbons, and looking-glasses, and nut-crackers, and fiddles, and hobby-horses, and many other gim-cracks; and having observed them, and all the other finnimbruns that make a complete country-fair; he said to his friend: 'Lord, how many things there are in this world, of which Diogenes hath no need!'"

Many things for which we have no need; but there is "*one thing needful!*" If we include in our prayers the petty little things we desire beyond the necessities, along with the prayer for the hallowing of God's Name, the coming of His kingdom, and the fulfillment of His will, we reveal that we do not understand these petitions. If your desire reaches up sincerely for these great gifts, then the petty trifles will fall into their proper place.

### Petitionary Prayer

Nevertheless, we may ask for what we need. Much nonsense has been written about the prayer of petition as being crude and childish, something that will be left behind by those who are advanced in the spiritual and intellectual life. Don't you believe it! Screwtape again had the truth of the matter; he advised Wormwood:

"Now is the time for raising intellectual difficulties about prayer of that sort. False spirituality is always to be encouraged. On the seemingly pious ground that 'praise and communion with God is the true prayer,' humans can often be lured into direct disobedience to the Enemy who (in His usual flat, commonplace, uninteresting way) has definitely told them to pray for their daily bread and the recovery of their sick. You will, of course, conceal from him the fact that the prayer for daily bread, interpreted in a 'spiritual sense,' is really just as crudely petitionary as it is in any other sense."<sup>3</sup>

Christ thought of prayer as asking God for something which we need; indeed, from one point of view, the Lord's Prayer is a string of requests. If you have any doubts about the prayer of petition, look up these passages in the New Testament: Matthew 7:7-11; Mark 11:24; Luke 11:22, 22:40; John 2:3 ff.; Acts 8:22; 16:25; James 1:5; 5:15; 1 John 5:14, 15 (this last passage contains everything that is important for the discussion of petitionary prayer).

### God the Provider

Some people object and raise the question whether we can rightly pray this petition for material needs. They say that these things are not properly the gifts of God; they are rather the result of human effort, industry, and work. Certainly, we reply, man must help and work and cooperate to supply his material needs. Nevertheless God is still the provider; He is behind it all.

"Back of the loaf is the snowy flour,  
And back of the flour the mill,  
And back of the mill is the wheat and the shower,  
And the sun and the Father's will."<sup>4</sup>

3. Lewis, C. S., *The Screwtape Letters*, Macmillan Company, New York, 1943, pp. 136f.

4. Babcock, Maltbie D., "Our Daily Bread."



The creative God is behind nature, behind natural law; it is His will that makes all nature function. As G. K. Chesterton said, the sun rises each morning, not because nature is in control, but because God says, "Get up and do it again."

Most of us perhaps deserve Rebecca West's scathing denunciation of "the mindless, traditionless, possessionless urban populations that are the children of the machine. . . . To them a loaf of bread is something they can buy at a bakery they do not think of the earth and the weather and the plow and the wheat and the harvest and the threshers and the mill. To them light and heat are what they summon by putting a match to a gas-get or a finger to a switch; they do not think of coal and the pithead and the shaft and the dynamo."<sup>5</sup>

The truth is, of course, that we are dependent upon our own efforts and the sweat and toil of other men, but ultimately upon God. It is "our bread" but is in the last analysis God's bread. Farmers know this better than city people. The farmer plows the field and scatters the seed, but he knows that the increase is given by another hand. Every grain of wheat is a miracle.<sup>6</sup> Sun, rain, wind, storm, and hail are not in man's power. The simple pagan knew this and made gods of the sun and the elements. Sophisticated, scientific-minded moderns do the same thing by making a god of natural law. But where nature is the revelation of God He can remain only sublime and holy, the unknown God, for if on some bright sunny day we feel that nature is revealing eternal love, mercy, goodness, and wisdom, a single frost in May, a single devastating storm at harvest time can shatter this optimism with doubt. The powers of nature are not dependable. You can find God in nature, but you can also lose Him there.

So you must go deeper to know that it is really God's hand that provides our daily bread. God is a Person and therefore He reveals Himself in a Person. In Jesus Christ He revealed Himself as a love, goodness, and wisdom that we can trust forever. In Jesus Christ alone we know that God is a faithful Father. What then should be our response to what He gives as the provider of all things?

### Thankfulness

Luther says in the Small Catechism:

"God indeed gives daily bread to all men, even to the wicked, without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to acknowledge our daily bread as His gift, and to receive it with thanksgiving."

In other words, God is always ready to give; He does not need to be asked. But we need to ask in order to be capable of receiving His divine gifts. We pray in this petition for the grace to acknowledge our complete dependence upon Him in all things.<sup>7</sup> All the material things of life become sacramental; we see them in the light of divine grace, everything that per-

5. West, Rebecca, *The Meaning of Treason*, Viking Press, New York, 1947, p. 188.

6. Look up in your hymnal Matthias Claudius' hymn: "We plow the fields, and scatter" for a beautiful expression of this truth.

7. Look up Luther's explanation of the First Article of the Creed.

tains to daily bread leads us to God and we acknowledge Him as the Giver of these gifts. Therefore, because we acknowledge our dependence both upon God and the toil of other men, our response will be two-fold: thankfulness to God and service to our fellow men.

Robert Louis Stevenson said, "The true ignorance is when a man does not know that he has received a good gift, or begins to imagine that he has got it for himself." The necessities of life are not something to be taken for granted; they are a mercy of God for which we must give thanks with our whole heart. Those who do not give thanks sink to the level of the animal. Some commentators profess surprise that the Lord's Prayer contains no note of thanksgiving. Luther found it in this petition and we, too, give thanks at the mention of daily bread.

### For Others Too

Jesus teaches us to say "Give us this day *our* daily bread," not "Give me *my* daily bread." We stand before God *together*; we are reminded again that this is a common prayer. All men need daily bread; so *together* we pray, not for ourselves only, but always at the same time for one another. So this petition, too, is an intercession. It bears upon its heart

"the starving of the poor, the shadow of curse on all, hard words, hard looks and savage misery, and struggling deaths unpitied and unwept, rich brothers' sad satieties, the weary manner of their lives and deaths that want in love, and lacking love lack all, the heavy sorrow of the world, the horror of the things we make our brothers bear, our brothers and our sisters."<sup>8</sup>

We pray that God will move and turn our hearts and the hearts of all men and nations to see that all men receive their daily bread. And it is also the resolve that, since God gives in abundance and men lack and starve only because other men fail in charity and cooperation, *our* lives shall be lives of stewardship.

### For Today Only

"This day." In this word we have the same teaching that Jesus gave in the Sermon on the Mount: "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:34). This does not mean that we pray only for today, expecting that God will supply us miraculously with each day's need. Jesus did not teach us to live a hand-to-mouth existence. It means rather that as we work today and earn our bread for tomorrow, so we should also pray to God for it and not merely work for it, or merely worry about it. It teaches us faith and trust. (Matthew 6:25, 26; I Peter 5:7). We are to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving and confidently commit the morrow to God's keeping, for He who nourished us today will not forget us tomorrow and He who gave us strength to work today will be with us tomorrow also.

8. Cripps, H. S., *The Death of St. Francis*, quoted in Farmer H. H., *The Healing Cross*, p. 167.

### **A Prayer**

O God, Who givest daily bread without our prayer, even to all the wicked, we pray Thee that Thou wouldst give us to acknowledge these Thy benefits; and enable us to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.



## VI

### THE FIFTH PETITION:—"FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US."

The first three petitions dealt with the things of God, the fourth petition with the necessities of our earthly life. The next three petitions, the fifth, sixth, and seventh, are a connected group. All three are concerned with that which is constantly threatening to interpose itself between us and God and separate us from the Father—our sin. Here we come to the center of the Prayer, as it is also the center of the Gospel itself.

In the fourth petition the Christian sees his daily bread in a different light from that of the non-Christian; to him it is an evidence of God's grace. So, too, the Christian looks upon sin in a different light from that of the non-Christian; he acknowledges his sinfulness, while the non-Christian does not let it concern him. The atheist declares that healthy, normal people know no sense of sin. It is nothing that cannot be adjusted by proper insight and education. Or he says that it is nothing but an ecclesiastical idea; the sense of sin is something invented by cunning priests. But we stand before God and address Him in earnest; we take our daily bread in earnest; now we take sin and evil in earnest. For if we do not realize and acknowledge our sinfulness in the sight of God, we are deceiving ourselves and do not realize our "real" situation. Therefore, in this Prayer Jesus holds our thought upon our sin through three petitions.

#### What Is Sin?

We need not attempt here a full definition of "sin." We need only to look into our own hearts and consciences to recognize that there is something in our lives which is constantly alienating us from God. Paul says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). Sin is therefore not a departure from a moral or legal standard or norm, but rather a lack of faith, a wrong relationship to God. Man's basic sin is described by Paul: "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." The creature puts himself in the place of the Creator. "Ye shall be as gods," said the Tempter, and men built their Tower of Babel as competitors of God. Hence the Christian idea of sin is not a matter of morality but of religion. If you think of sin only as transgressions against the law of God, such as murder, fornication, adultery, theft, deliberate lying, or drunkenness, it may be unreal to you, because these are not commonly our sins. But if you look deeper you will find that our sin shows itself as egotism, selfishness, secularism, as unwillingness to acknowledge our utter dependence upon

God. It is a personal choice or action against a Person. For the Christian the fundamental question is not, "Are you good?" but, "Are you in right relationship to God?" The moral transgressions are the consequences of cleavage from God. Sin then becomes a power that enslaves men (John 8:34), and Paul gives a vivid description of this servitude to sin at the close of Romans 1. Individual sins are only the effects of estrangement from God. But being estranged, we stand before God, alone and condemned, because He is holy and righteous.

### **Forgiveness**

How can we obtain forgiveness? We cannot forgive ourselves. It is no use trying to persuade ourselves, as many young people do, that "God's a good fellow, and 'twill all be well," as Omar Khayyam said; for that kind of complacent, blasphemous optimism only makes our sin worse. But God has given us His Word and sworn by Himself that for the sake of His only begotten Son He will freely forgive us our sins. Christ's Cross shows us our sin, but it also shows us that God forgives. In Jesus Christ we see our estrangement from God; but if, in the liberty to accept or refuse that which He has given us, we turn to Him in repentance and faith, He grants us forgiveness. He Himself bridges the gulf between Him and us, restores the relationship and makes us His reconciled children. Forgiveness is not merely release from the penalty of sin, but from the sense of guilt. It is new life; it is a complete restoration of a broken relationship as though it had never been broken; not because we deserve it or can earn it, but solely because of Jesus Christ. And the seal of that reconciliation between the Father and His child is given us in our Baptism.

### **Daily Forgiveness**

As Augustine pointed out when he was preaching to the newly baptized, there is a distinction between the forgiveness we receive in Baptism and the forgiveness we need daily. "We who have been baptized are also debtors. Not as though there is anything that has not been forgiven us in Baptism, but because as long as we live we sin, and this we must be forgiven daily." Even though we have been reconciled to God, we still commit much sin. We have only to measure our daily lives by the first three commandments to know that we sin daily against God and by the last six commandments to know that we sin daily against our neighbor. "In the presence of God all must lower their plumes and be glad merely that they can receive forgiveness. Let no one think that as long as we live here he can reach such position that he will not need such forgiveness." (Large Catechism.) Therefore, Jesus teaches us to pray daily: "Forgive us our debts."

One of my teachers has expressed all this so beautifully that I cannot forbear quoting the following passage:

"It matters not whether we call them 'debts' or 'trespasses' or 'sins;' we all know what the words mean, and we know that our lives are full of the things that they describe. Here in this prayer, then, we take all those things, large and small, known and unknown, and lay them before God, Here are our *debts*—the things we ought to have done and have

not done; here are our *trespasses*—the things we have done that we ought not to have done; here are our sins—the things in which, one way or another, we have missed the mark that God has set: we take them all, and lay them with shame and sorrow before God and say ‘Father forgive them. We have desecrated Thy Name, hindered Thy kingdom, run counter to Thy will, sought to be independent of Thee, eaten our daily bread in forgetfulness of Thee; these are our debts; Father forgive them.’”<sup>1</sup>

### **The Corollary**

Then, in order to refresh our memory of it, let us read again Luther’s explanation of the fifth petition, the last sentence of which leads us to the corollary of the petition:

“We pray in this petition, that our heavenly Father would not regard our sins nor because of them deny our prayers; for we neither merit, nor deserve those things for which we pray; but that He would grant us all things through grace, even though we sin daily, and deserve nothing but punishment. And certainly we, on our part, will heartily forgive, and gladly do good to those who may sin against us.”

“As we forgive those who trespass against us.”

Here Jesus notes the effect that God’s forgiveness must have upon us. And He goes on at the end of the Prayer in Matthew to say: “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14, 15, R.S.V., cf. Mark 11:25). And the natural thing here is to think of the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant. Pause and read it for yourself in Matthew 18:21-35.

### **The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant**

If ever you want to make clear to someone what the Gospel is, tell him the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant. It is the teaching of justification by faith alone, not invented by Paul as some would claim, but taught by Jesus Himself. The unmerciful servant is man, as Jesus sees him. And when Jesus portrays the servant being forgiven and restored by his lord “without any merit or worthiness in him,” He is telling us that this is every man’s situation in the sight of God. We all share in the universal guilt of mankind and at the same time in the fathomless mercy of God. The servant forfeited the forgiveness of his lord because he refused to forgive a smaller debt owing to him. So we cannot receive the forgiveness of God as long as we are unwilling to forgive others.

Neither this petition nor the parable teaches that God’s forgiveness is dependent upon our forgiveness of others. That would limit God’s free grace. We do not pray: “God, forgive me *because* I have forgiven others,” but rather, “Because Thou forgivest me, I too will heartily forgive others;” which is something more positive. Jesus would make our attitude toward our neighbor grow out of God’s attitude toward us. The words “without

1. Jacobs, Charles M., *Helps on the Way*, United Lutheran Publication House, Philadelphia, 1933, p. 50.



any merit or worthiness in me" would be seriously limited if our forgiveness of others were a condition of God's forgiveness of us. The master in the parable forgave his servant because of his petition, and so also God forgives us when in faith we pray for forgiveness. Love and forgiveness of others are the fruit that grow out of gratitude for God's love and forgiveness. Forgiveness received brings the obligation to forgive, and from the Holy Spirit comes the power to do this.

We are obliged to forgive because it is the will and command of God that we love our neighbors and our enemies. If we refuse to forgive others and insist upon our "rights," which in human eyes seem very minor sins, we prove that we have *forgotten* what God has done for us; and the unforgiving spirit becomes a decisive sin. Luther calls our willingness and ability to forgive others a "sign" or "token" of whether we are living by grace and faith. Jesus is saying, in effect, that if you know the God who gives and forgives you will not grow weary of forgiving your fellow men.

### **Do We Forgive?**

We know the parable and the petition; but too often we forget that we are the unmerciful servants, you and I. We forget that we do not forgive our neighbor, our fellow student, the teacher, or the man or woman against whom we hold some animosity or who we think holds something against us. We say, "I'll get even with him;" "I'll forgive, but I cannot forget;" "I'll forgive, but I won't have anything more to do with him;" "I'll forgive, but we can never be the same again." We forget that the law of God's kingdom is: "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). We react to injuries, real or imagined, either with resentment and retaliation or with indifference; we fail to make the first move toward reconciliation with our neighbor; we fail "to apologize for him, speak well of him, and put the most charitable construction on all that he does;" but still we dare to pray to God, "Forgive us our trespasses." This is but to say: "Lord, I hate my enemy; do Thou in like manner hate me. I refuse to forgive him; take not away my offense. I will not speak to him; be Thou deaf to my call." Am I the unmerciful servant?

The fact that we do not forgive, or do not forgive fully, indebts us anew to God, places us in even greater need of His forgiveness. It makes us unworthy of His forgiveness because an unforgiving heart cannot really believe in God's forgiveness. A divided heart that desires forgiveness for itself and rejects it for others is a heart that has no true faith in God, for faith is the acceptance of God's forgiveness; and where there is no faith the prayer is nullified. To forgive is not easy; therefore, being persons sorely in need of mercy and patience, we pray in this petition for God's help to be merciful, patient, and forgiving. If we have not forgiven, the Lord's Prayer can at least lead us to the earnest intention to forgive in the future.

### **Personal and Corporate Forgiveness**

This petition, like the sixth and seventh petitions, is both a personal and a common prayer. God expects this readiness to forgive of *me*. This will be



impressed upon us if in our private devotions we change the pronouns and say, "Forgive *me my* trespasses, as *I* forgive those who trespass against *me*." This will prevent you from taking refuge behind the "we" and remind you again that prayer is an "I" meeting a "Thou" Who knows *your* sin, *your* need of forgiveness, and *your* willingness to forgive others.

But it still remains a common prayer. It is the prayer of the Church, of the whole fellowship of believers in Christ, and when we pray it we acknowledge ourselves to be members of this Church. We pray not only for ourselves but for our brethren everywhere; the petition becomes an intercession. We confess our common guilt, not only as many individuals, but in the sense of the corporate guilt of the Church. The Christian Church in this petition acknowledges its sins and shortcomings and lays them at the feet of God, likewise praying for grace to practice forgiveness. Only so do we become a Christian Church and only so do I become a member of the Body of Christ.

Dr. Adolf Keller has recorded a dramatic instance of the power of this petition. He says in his book, *Christian Europe Today*:<sup>2</sup>

"When we met in Geneva for the first time after the last World War, in 1920, to prepare the future World Conference of Churches at Stockholm in 1925, the French delegates refused to enter into negotiations before the Germans confessed their sole guilt for the war and repented. The conference was on the point of breaking off. Then the Moderator of the Waldensian Church, Signor Giampiccoli, stood up and said: 'Dear brethren, I lost two sons in the war and yet I feel nothing in my heart towards the brethren from the belligerent countries other than peace and love. What we need are not human declarations but the grace of God for the overcoming of our sins. Let us pray the Lord's Prayer.' I don't know whether the prayer 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors' has ever been prayed in a deeper sense than at that time. We began with common repentance and this common repentance saved the Ecumenical movement which had hardly started."



## A Prayer

We pray Thee, our Father in heaven, that Thou wouldest not regard our sins, nor deny our requests on account of them: for we are not worthy of anything that we ask, and have in no wise merited it. Grant us all through grace, though we daily commit many sins, and deserve chastisement alone. Help us also on our part to forgive and readily to do good to those who offend against us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

2. Keller, Adolf, *Christian Europe Today*, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1942, p. 200.



## VII

### THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH PETITIONS:—"LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL"

We have said that the fifth, sixth, and seventh petitions are a connected group, all dealing with that which separates us from God—sin. It may be said that the fifth petition deals with the sins of the past, the sixth with those of the immediate future, and the seventh with the evil of all eternity. Looking backward, we have acknowledged our sin, our indebtedness to God's righteousness and love, and prayed that His grace would cover it all. The forgiveness of our sins is the first need of our souls, the first requisite for our relationship to God, but it is not the only one. When this ground has been won, it must be defended and kept. This is the aim of the sixth petition.

Looking forward, then, to the coming day and night, and knowing the evil that is struggling within our souls and outside us in the world, we see the dangers of new temptations and fresh falls from God's grace, and we pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." It is a confession of weakness and helplessness and a prayer for strength and help. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," says Paul to the Philippians (2:12). Having received the forgiveness of sins, we must fight the good fight of faith and sanctification, and only a naive underestimation of the implacability of the enemy will make us forget that it is a real battle.

#### The Meaning of Temptation

The word "temptation" has several meanings. Originally it meant "to attempt," "to try." When a man "attempts" something it is a question whether he will succeed or fail, so the word came to mean "to test." But because he often fails, the word acquired the sense of "entice to do evil." With the original meaning we are not concerned here. The latter two, however, suggest the true interpretation of this petition. There are temptations which "test" us, which strengthen our obedience to God's will and make our good will stronger. But there are also temptations which "entice to do evil," which lead to disobedience, allowing the first suggestion and impulse to mature, as Augustine said, "from a thought to a picture, to a fascination, to a fall."

So temptation is both a good thing and a bad thing. It is a good and useful thing because without it we cannot win strength to resist; for temptation is always a form of choice and if we are living earnestly we are constantly facing choices. Without temptation we would only float with the stream, "a

feat which any dead dog can accomplish," as Dean Inge said. Through temptation God confers gifts upon us. Through it He breaks up our complacency, rebukes our neglect of prayer for strength and guidance, pricks the bubble of our self-righteousness and self-trust, tests our obedience in every choice we make, and provides the discipline of character and the growth in grace that must be the fruit of faith. Says Browning in *Bishop Blougram's Apology*:

"When the fight begins within himself  
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,  
Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—  
He's left, himself, in the middle: the soul awakes  
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!  
Never leave growing till the life to come!"

This is the kind of temptation we should welcome: "Count it all joy, my brethren," says James, "when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness." "Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him" (James I: 2,12, R.S.V.). When James said this, however, he did not mean that we are to pray for temptations to come; it was rather affirming a faith that knows that nothing can separate it from God.

### Should We Seek Temptation?

Sometimes when we are younger we run deliberately into temptation. What has proved morally fatal to millions we think we would like to try ourselves; we think it will be different with us. Temptations and testings must come, but it is stupid to ask for them or to play with them. There are plenty of opportunities on the straight path of life to test character and develop steadfastness without purposely putting ourselves in the way of evil, which is a presumption against God, if we thereby seek to test Him, expecting Him to get us out of trouble. C. E. Montague, the English editor and essayist, said some words which meet squarely an idea about this that young persons often cherish:

"There is a notion, common among hobbledehoyes, that 'experience' can be widened by a loss of self-control. Some of them will misbehave themselves just to 'see life.' Diddled by stale figures of speech, a lad at the university will get drunk 'just to have the experience,' or do something worse because he wants to have 'experienced everything' or to 'know the whole of life.' And some half-sane or trashy-hearted writers of fuller age have erected this mess of vague thought into a kind of philosophy. Life they regard as an opportunity for collectorship, and they think of any new thing, noble or foul, that one does or sees as an addition to one's collection and an enrichment of one's personality. . . . These ethics of the dust rest wholly on one blunder. They assume that every novel step which you take must needs increase your experience and not diminish it. This algebra of experience recognizes only the positive sign. They reckon with no *minus* experiences. They think of the clean



boy who gives up his cleanness as if he had added something to his experience and subtracted nothing; whereas, at every loss of self-control, you make some exchange of the spacious lightsome experience of moral autonomy for the dark and narrow experience of moral helplessness: you always come off the net loser, your treasury of experience depleted on balance, your vision of life more or less blurred."<sup>1</sup>

When we pray, "Lead us not into temptation," we are not seeking to escape testing in life. We are asking God to help us to keep ourselves out of those circumstances which may mean our downfall, and close to Him and to the places where we are strengthened for good. The petition comes from a heart that knows how severely temptations can shake us, how readily they can capture our will. So when, with James, we welcome temptation, we are looking in faith at God's power; but in this petition we are looking at our own weakness and praying for God's help to enable us to walk unharmed through temptation, so that it will not entice us to evil but rather give us new joy because victory over it confirms our faith and produces steadfastness.

### Does God Tempt Us?

This petition has caused scholars and simple Christians great difficulty. The question arises: If temptation is bad for us, then God would not lead us into it, and if temptation is good for us, then we ought to bear it and not ask to be delivered—is it right, then, to pray God, "Lead us not into temptation"? Does temptation come from God? The answer must be yes and no. Yes, in so far as our whole life is constantly being put to the test by God. God is always testing us as to whether we are being obedient or not, whether we are proving ourselves faithful or not, whether we are sinning or not. But even here there is the promise that, if we trust Him, "God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (I Corinthians 10:13).

But the answer is no, in so far as the voice of the temptation itself is within us and is not the voice of God. God does not will that we should sin. He desires us to obey him. The temptation, as an enticement to evil, does not come from him; it comes from within ourselves. James wrote to correct this misunderstanding. "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God;' for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one; but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire" (1:13,14). So Luther, too, declares in his explanation of this petition in the Small Catechism:

"God indeed tempts no one to sin; but we pray in this petition that God would so guard and preserve us, that the devil, the world, and our own flesh, may not deceive us, nor lead us into error and unbelief, despair, and other great and shameful sins; but that, when so tempted, we may finally prevail and gain the victory."

1. Montague, C. E., *The Right Place, A Book of Pleasures*, Doubleday, Page & Co., New York, 1924, pp. 216ff.

## Three Sources of Temptation

Temptations are of many kinds, and the purely physical ones are not by any means the worst. Our worst temptations often grow out of the occupation we are in. Dr. Emile Cammaerts has pointed out that the students face three particular temptations simply because they are students: the temptation to separate study from worship, or to make a false distinction between their Christian life and their student life; the temptation to attach more importance to their profession than to their faith; and the temptation to love God only with the heart, but not with the mind also.<sup>2</sup> This point should be kept in mind as we consider the three sources of temptation mentioned by Luther in his explanation of this petition: the devil, the world, and our own flesh. The Large Catechism enlarges upon these sources and we give them here since they are not readily available elsewhere.

### The Flesh

"We all dwell in the flesh, and carry the old Adam on our shoulders; he exerts himself and daily incites us to wantonness, indolence, excess in eating and drinking, avarice and deception, to defraud our neighbor and impose upon him, and, in short, to all manner of evil lusts which cleave to us by nature . . ." (Compare this with the 6, 7, 9 and 10 Commandments.)

### The World

Then there are the temptations that arise out of our life and contact with other human beings.

"Then comes the world, which offends us in word and deed, and impels us to anger and impatience. In short, there is nothing but hatred and envy, enmity, violence and wrong, unfaithfulness, vengeance, cursing, raillery, slander, pride and haughtiness, with superfluous ornament, honor, fame and power, where no one is willing to be the least, but every one desires to sit at the head and to be seen before all." (Luther is obviously thinking of sins against the 8 Commandment; every temptation to lovelessness and pride.)

### The Devil

Finally, he names the arch-tempter who is behind every other temptation but whose chief aim is to win the children of God back to himself, to undermine and destroy their faith. There are temptations that are so subtle, so lonely, and so diabolical that we can only ascribe them to an unseen power of evil at work in the world and in us. The New Testament calls that power the devil, and though no Christian today need picture him as they did in the Middle Ages, the fact is still with us.

"Then comes the devil . . . especially exerting himself in spiritual matters and such as pertain to the conscience, namely, to induce us to despise and disregard the works and Word of God, to tear us from our

2. It would be worthwhile to consult the article in which these points are made and to bring them before the discussion group. Dr. Cammaerts' article is entitled "The Three Temptations of a Christian Student" and may be found in *The Student World*, XXXVIII, 2 (Second Quarter, 1945), pp. 108-13.

faith, from home and from love, and bring us into a perverted faith or unbelief, false security and obduracy; or, on the other hand, to despair, denial of God, blasphemy, and innumerable other shocking things."

### Prayer Is the Weapon Against Temptation

We are surrounded by these temptations every day of our lives. We cannot eliminate them nor always avoid them; but one thing we can do; as Luther says, we can pray:

"that we may not fall and be drowned therein. To feel temptation is therefore a far different thing from consenting or yielding to it. We must all feel it. . . . But such feeling, as long as it is against our will and we prefer to be rid of it, can harm no one. For if we did not feel it, it could not be called temptation. But to consent thereto is when we give it loose reins or do not resist or pray against it."

We gain the victory when our prayer is honest and sincere, when we open our hearts to God without concealment or reservation, each of us laying before God the particular and special temptation which is at the bottom of our own personal struggle. We say in our hearts: "Lead *me* not into temptation. Father, help *me* not to yield to *my* temptation;" but we ought also to be praying, "Lead *us* not into temptation," praying for our fellows, because they need our intercession as we need their intercession and help in all the battle of faith.

### "But deliver us from evil"

In the fifth and sixth petitions we prayed for the forgiveness of the sins of the past and sought God's help to conquer the temptations of the immediate future. Luther's explanation of the seventh petition puts the emphasis upon deliverance from all the evil of the present and in all eternity.

"We pray in this petition, as in a summary, that our heavenly Father would deliver us from all manner of evil, whether it affects the body or soul, property or reputation; and at last, when the hour of death shall come, grant us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this world of sorrow to Himself in heaven."

"As in a summary," this petition looks at the whole mass of evil that is constantly shaking our faith and threatening to separate us from God here on earth and forever in eternity and launches against it this final cry to God who alone can conquer it and give us the victory.

When you pray this petition you will remember the evil that affects *the body*—all the physical ills, weaknesses, and accidents to which we are exposed; pain, hunger, thirst, disease. We pray that, if it be God's will, we may be delivered from them, but most of all, that none of them may shake our trust in God.

When you pray, remember the evil that affects *the soul*—worry, anxiety, uncertainty, longing, heartache, grief, the whole world of mental and spiritual trouble which oppress a neurotic generation, besides the sense of guilt and sin and the struggle against temptation (V and VI Petitions). Pray that none of these may separate you from God the Father.

When you pray, remember the evil that affects our *property*—loss and

damage to the possessions men need for their existence. Think of men, women, and children, facing loss from unemployment, famine, and war in a world that is full of these things and let your prayer be an intercession for them. Think of the millions who can pray this prayer today! Pray that no loss of material things may break your relationship with God.

When you pray, remember the evil that affects one's *reputation*—misunderstandings, contemptuous remarks, false suspicions, gossip and slander, the shame of failure, all the consequence of men's disobedience to the Eighth Commandment. How it hurts when one's reputation and good name are injured; it pulls the foundations of life from under one's feet. Pray to be delivered from this evil, but that if it comes, it may not shatter our faith in the God of all comfort and hope.

We take all these evils to God and commit them to Him in the steadfast faith that He and He alone can heal and deliver us. And if we must continue to suffer and endure them here, we still are strengthened and uplifted by the hope of everlasting heaven where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying." For this we pray, not only for ourselves but for one another, combining the personal and the corporate as Luther does in his paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer:

"Deliver us from evil, Lord!  
The days are dark and foes abroad;  
Redeem us from eternal death;  
And when we yield our dying breath,  
Console us, grant us calm release,  
And take our souls to Thee in peace."



### Prayers

O God, Who temptest no one to sin, we pray Thee so to guard and keep us that the devil, the world and our own flesh may not deceive us, nor lead us into error, unbelief, despair and other great and shameful sins, and that though we be thus tempted, we may finally prevail and gain victory; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Our Father in Heaven, deliver us, we pray Thee, from all manner of evil, whether it touch our body or soul, our property or good name; and at last, when the hour of death shall come, grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this vale of sorrow to Thyself in heaven; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Our Lord. Amen.



## VIII

THE CONCLUSION:—"FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM AND  
THE POWER AND THE GLORY,  
FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN."

The concluding words of the Lord's Prayer are not in universal use in Christendom. The Roman Church, for example, does not include them in its liturgical forms. Nor, apparently, were they spoken by Jesus, for they do not appear in the Gospel of Luke and they are absent in the oldest manuscripts of Matthew. They were added by the later copyists of the Gospel (Matthew 6:13). Hence they did not appear in the Small Catechism until after Luther's death and Luther himself wrote no explanation of them in any of his expositions of the Prayer. The words doubtless had their origin in the congregation's response of praise after the Prayer; indeed, it is still the custom in some churches for the congregation to sing these words after the minister has said the Prayer. The New Testament is rich in such doxologies (Luke 2:14; 19:38; II Timothy 4:18; Revelation 1:6; 4:11; 11:15; 12:10 f.).

### **"For Thine Is the Kingdom"**

With these words on our lips we stand face to face in personal encounter with the God who is King of kings and Lord of lords, whose Name is holy, who is building His kingdom in accord with His eternal purpose, whose will is done in heaven and on earth, and who therefore can and will answer the prayer we make in the first three petitions. He is able to give us all things, "above all that we ask or think," including "everything that is required to satisfy our bodily needs" (IV Petition). Therefore, we thank and praise and glorify Him in these words which are so much like those of an Old Testament doxology: "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head over all" (I Chronicles 29:11).

### **"and the power"**

Our God is the God of ultimate power for He is the eternal, unresting power of the universe, never to be contained or comprehended by the mind of man. (Psalm 147:5; Isaiah 40:26.) And just because He who is in final control of all things has revealed Himself as the Father who delights to show His power as love, we can pray to Him for power wherever and whenever we need this power from on high. We need that power every day as the petitions of the Lord's Prayer show us. We need power to withstand temptation (VI Petition). We need it to forgive others (V Petition), to obey God's will (III Petition), to hallow His Name (I Petition), and we need it to possess our souls in the struggle against evil in every form (VII Petition). That power which we need daily He gives us in answer to our prayer.

### **“and the glory, for ever and ever”**

Here the hope of glory in eternity, which was the prayer of the seventh petition, comes to our minds again. In a faith that rejoices, we know that the evil and suffering and frustration of this life will be crowned with the eternal glory of the heavenly kingdom, of which Paul speaks, “Rejoice in the hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2; cf. Romans 8:17-18; I Thessalonians 2:12; I Peter 5:10). It reminds us of those imperishable hymns of yearning hope: “Jerusalem, thou city fair and high, Would God I were in thee;” “O Mother dear, Jerusalem! When shall I come to thee?” and “Jerusalem the golden.” Look them up in your hymnal.

Thus, for those who have pondered the heavy freight of rich meaning in each word of this Prayer, this conclusion gathers up again all the content of the petitions and shows us that they are not in vain *because* the kingdom and the power and the glory are God’s. It ends with praise and adoration because He can and He will answer our petitions. The Lord’s Prayer culminates in worship and devotion and becomes a perfect prayer by adding thanksgiving and adoration to our petitions. Adoration is the alpha and omega of this Prayer; it begins and ends it. God is first and last in the pattern prayer; so should He be in all our prayers.

### **“Amen”**

So we come to the end of the prayer and the last word is not least in importance. Luther, who laid great emphasis upon the word “Amen” in all his expositions, was moved to change a word in Ecclesiastes 7:8, “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof,” and say, “Better is the end of prayer than the beginning,” for “at the end, if you speak the ‘Amen’ with heartfelt confidence and faith, the prayer is surely founded and will be heard; if it does not have this ending, then neither the beginning nor the middle is worth anything.”

The word “Amen” is a Hebrew word that has survived unchanged in Greek, Arabic, English and other languages. Jews, Mohammedans, and Christians alike use it in their worship. It means “truly” or “so be it,” and signifies the endorsement of the statement of another person, especially a statement of God’s truth made in His Name. In the early Church the “Amen” was not only repeated but uttered loudly. Jerome tells us that “Amen” used to sound like thunder from the congregation.

In the Small Catechism Luther says:

“It means that I should be assured that such petitions are acceptable to our heavenly Father, and are heard by Him; for He Himself has commanded us to pray in this manner, and has promised to hear us. Amen, Amen, that is, Yea, yea, it shall be so.”

When we say it in worship with others, the emphasis is perhaps as a climax of praise, but we shall misuse it if there is not in our utterance also personal assent, faith, certainty of being heard by God, and a response of dedicated resolution.

It signifies personal assent in which we make our own and commit our-

selves to the will and purpose of God in the Prayer. Macbeth realized what it meant to utter "Amen;" he felt he could not say it with the stain of blood upon his hands. "I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen' stuck in my throat."

It is a joyful, confident affirmation of faith and certainty that our prayer is heard. Luther's explanation takes God at His word; this prayer will be heard, he says, because God has commanded us to pray in this manner and promised to hear us (Matthew 21:22; Mark 11:4; Matthew 15:28; John 16:23; James 1:6,7). All true prayer is prayer made in faith. Doubt is the death of prayer. Luther says that the doubter is like a beggar who holds out his cup to receive a gift, but is constantly pulling it back. "God cannot give anything definite any more than you can give anything to a man when he does not hold his hand still." The little word "Amen" is "nothing else than the word of undoubting faith," for it is "God's Word and promise that makes your prayer good, not your devotion."

It is a word that signifies dedication and resolve. We throw our wills and lives after our prayer, determined that we shall do our part in our salvation, small though that part may be. It is the frank and joyful acceptance of the stewardship of life.

Countless thousands have had this experience of prayer that is blessed and heard of God, and everyone can have this experience who earnestly prays the Lord's Prayer "in Jesus' Name" with unwavering faith. So we, too, can conclude our prayer with an "Amen" that rings with deep, sure, victorious happy faith, in the spirit of the last stanza of Luther's hymn paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer:

"Amen! that is, So let it be!  
Strengthen our faith and trust in Thee;  
That we may doubt not, but believe  
That what we ask we shall receive;  
Thus in Thy Name and at Thy Word  
We say Amen; now hear us, Lord!"

### **Praying the Prayer Aright**

I believe that those who have followed these studies to the end and have understood them will not stand in danger of making a "martyr" of the Lord's Prayer, as Luther said, or of using "vain repetitions as the heathen do," as Jesus said. You may object that it is impossible to keep in one's mind all that has been said upon these petitions, considering it prayerfully in the presence of God every time we say the Prayer. This, of course, is quite true. Therefore, in concluding, a few words concerning this may not be amiss.

In the first place, we ought to be grateful that this wonderful divine prayer is so broad, so inclusive, so inexhaustible, that its petitions cover everything that can ever touch or affect our lives, personally and corporately, spiritually and materially, the life and reign of God as well as our life as men and Christians. Nothing human is alien to it. "The Lord's Prayer can be used both as a liturgical act by a congregation of five thousand people and also as an infinitely flexible means of expressing the personal and private devotion



of each one of that multitude, with all their individual variations.”<sup>3</sup>

It is not necessary that everything we have learned in these studies be uppermost in full consciousness every time we pray the Lord’s Prayer. It is chiefly important that we know the direction to which the individual petitions point. If we know this, then one or another thought or idea will naturally assume first place according to the circumstances and needs of the hour or day in which we pray. The wonderful thing about this Prayer is that it becomes the perfect translator and interpreter of our own individual needs to God. Whether we pray it as individuals, as a group, or as a congregation, whether our mood is joy or sorrow, thankfulness or anxiety, always the petitions are the spokesmen of our stammering speech with the Father.

The emphasis may change from day to day. Today this petition is specially meaningful, tomorrow it may be another; today we pause at this word, tomorrow at another. How different the Lord’s Prayer is in the morning, as we look forward to the day’s work and study and what the day may bring forth; and how different again at night after the day’s work is done, after meeting with this or that person or idea or experience during the day! What a different thing it is when we pray it at the Baptism of a child or adult from what it is when it is said at a marriage or a funeral! How its colors and stresses change as we utter it at a confessional service, the Lord’s Supper, the ordination of a minister, the installation of deacons, or at the bed of the sick and dying! How it takes on fresh meanings when we say it on the great festivals, Reformation Day, Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter! Think of it being said in a little congregation on the prairies and at the same time in a great ecumenical meeting of Christians from many churches and nations in many languages, all praying together the Lord’s Prayer!

Its character is always different, always it gathers up perfectly and fully the special needs of every individual; but always it is the same prayer of our Saviour, the same prayer of all Christians on earth. It is given to you and me as a true guide for all our prayers that we may be heard of the Father and receive peace and blessing and salvation.

### The Witness

We noted at the beginning what Luther said of making a “martyr” of the Lord’s Prayer by praying it mechanically and thoughtlessly. The word “martyr,” however, has another meaning; originally it meant a “witness.” It has been a witness to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for centuries all over the world, sometimes in the most unexpected places. The daughter of Karl Marx was once speaking to an English friend and the talk turned to religion. “I was brought up without any religion. I do not believe in God,” she said, and then added a little wistfully, “but the other day in an old German book I came across a German prayer, and if the God of that prayer exists, I think I could believe in Him.” “What was that prayer?”

3. Balmforth, Henry, *The Christian Religion*, London, S.P.C.K., 1945, p. 116.



asked the friend. Then the daughter of Karl Marx repeated slowly in German the "Our Father."

May you, too, let the Lord's Prayer be a witness in your own life and before your "neighbor" wherever you go.



### **A Prayer**

Our heavenly Father, Who hast Thyself commanded us to pray after this manner and hast promised to hear our prayer: Grant us to be assured that these petitions are acceptable unto Thee. Amen, Amen: yea, yea, it shall be done.

## The Lord's Prayer

### THE INTRODUCTION

Our Father, Who art in heaven.

*What is meant by this Introduction?*

*Answer.* God would thereby affectionately encourage us to believe that He is truly our Father, and that we are His children indeed, so that we may call upon Him with all cheerfulness and confidence, even as beloved children entreat their affectionate parent.

### THE FIRST PETITION

Hallowed by Thy Name.

*What is meant by this Petition?*

*Answer.* The Name of God is indeed holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be hallowed also by us.

*How is this effected?*

*Answer.* When the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, lead holy lives in accordance with it; to this may our blessed Father in heaven help us. But whoever teaches and lives otherwise than as God's Word prescribes, profanes the Name of God among us; from this preserve us, heavenly Father.

### THE SECOND PETITION

Thy kingdom come.

*What is meant by this Petition?*

*Answer.* The kingdom of God comes indeed of itself, without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may come unto us also.

*When is this effected?*

*Answer.* When our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word, and live a godly life here on earth, and in heaven for ever.

### THE THIRD PETITION

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

*What is meant by this Petition?*

*Answer.* The good and gracious will of God is done indeed without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may be done by us also.

*When is this effected?*

*Answer.* When God frustrates and brings to naught every evil counsel and purpose, which would hinder us from hallowing the Name of God, and prevent His kingdom from coming to us, such as the will of the devil, of the world, and of our own flesh; and when He strengthens us, and keeps us steadfast in His Word and in the faith, even unto our end. This is His gracious and good will.

#### THE FOURTH PETITION

Give us this day our daily bread.

*What is meant by this Petition?*

*Answer.* God gives indeed without our prayer, even to the wicked also their daily bread; but we pray in this petition that He would make us sensible of His benefits, and enable us to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

*What is implied in the words: "Our daily bread"?*

*Answer.* All things that pertain to the wants and the support of this present life; such as food, raiment, money, goods, house and land, and other property; a believing spouse and good children; trustworthy servants and faithful magistrates; favorable seasons, peace and health; education and honor; true friends, good neighbors, and the like.

#### THE FIFTH PETITION

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

*What is meant by this Petition?*

*Answer.* We pray in this petition, that our heavenly Father would not regard our sins, nor deny us our requests on account of them; for we are not worthy of any thing for which we pray, and have not merited it; but that He would grant us all things through grace, although we daily commit much sin, and deserve chastisement alone. We will therefore, on our part, both heartily forgive, and also readily do good to those who may injure or offend us.

#### THE SIXTH PETITION

And lead us not into temptation.

*What is meant by this Petition?*

*Answer.* God indeed tempts no one to sin; but we pray in this petition that God would so guard and preserve us, that the devil, the world, and our own flesh, may not deceive us, nor lead us into error and unbelief, despair, and other great and shameful sins; and that, though we may be thus tempted, we may nevertheless finally prevail and gain the victory.

#### THE SEVENTH PETITION

But deliver us from evil.

*What is meant by this Petition?*

*Answer.* We pray in this petition, as in a summary, that our heavenly Father would deliver us from all manner of evil, whether it affect the body or soul, property or character, and at last, when the hour of death shall arrive, grant us a happy end, and graciously take us from this world of sorrow to Himself in heaven.

#### CONCLUSION

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

*What is meant by the word "Amen"?*

*Answer.* That I should be assured that such petitions are acceptable to our heavenly Father, and are heard by Him; for He Himself has commanded us to pray in this manner, and has promised that He will hear us. Amen, Amen, that is, Yea, yea, it shall be so.

## BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Listed here are a few of the best books on prayer in general, the Lord's Prayer in particular, and Luther on the Lord's Prayer. Suggestions for further reference have not been appended to each chapter since books on the Lord's Prayer are usually divided into chapters which follow the order of the petitions and the relevant material can thus be easily found.

### On Prayer

Andrews, C. F., *Christ and Prayer*, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1937.  
Brown, William Adams, *The Life of Prayer in a World of Science*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931.

Buttrick, George Arthur, *Prayer*, Abingdon-Cokesbury, Nashville, 1942.

Fosdick, H. E., *The Meaning of Prayer*, Association Press, New York, 1917.

Gossip, John Arthur, *In the Secret Place of the Most High*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1947.

Hallesby, O., *Prayer*, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1931.

Harkness, Georgia, *Prayer and the Common Life*, Abingdon-Cokesbury, Nashville, 1948.

Heiler, Friedrich, *Prayer*, Oxford, New York, 1932.

Jenkins, Daniel T., *Prayer and the Service of God*, Morehouse-Gorham, New York, 1945.

McFadyen, John E., *The Prayers of the Bible*, A. C. Armstrong & Son, New York, n.d. (On Lord's Prayer see chapter "The Teaching and Practice of Jesus," pp. 121-45.)

Stewart, George S., *The Lower Levels of Prayer*, Abingdon-Cokesbury, Nashville, 1939.

Wyon, Olive, *The School of Prayer*, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1944.

### On the Lord's Prayer

Chamberlain, William Douglas, *The Manner of Prayer*, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1943.

Gore, Charles, *Prayer and the Lord's Prayer* (new edition), Harper and Brothers, New York, 1947.

Gore, Charles, *The Sermon on the Mount. A Practical Exposition*, John Murray, London, 1912. Chapter VII, "The Lord's Prayer," pp. 128-50.

Jacobs, Charles M., *Helps on the Way*, United Lutheran Publication House, Philadelphia, 1933. Includes nine meditations on the Lord's Prayer addressed to students.

Kennedy, G. A. Studdert, *The Wicket Gate*, Doubleday, Doran, New York, 1928.

Miller, C. Armand, *The Perfect Prayer and Its Lessons*, General Council Publication House, Philadelphia, 1902.

Newton, Joseph Fort, *Where Are We in Religion?* Macmillan Company, New York, On seventh petition see pp. 43-52.

Nolde, O. Frederick, *Truth and Life, The Meaning of the Catechism*, United Lutheran Publication House, Philadelphia, 1937; Chapter IV, pp. 51-69.



Reid, James, *The Temple in the Heart*, Cokesbury, Nashville, 1938. Chapters LIV to LXII on Lord's Prayer.

Scott, John F., *The Religion of the Lord's Prayer*, Abingdon-Cokesbury, Nashville, 1946.

Sockman, Ralph W., *The Lord's Prayer*, Pilgrim Press, Boston, 1947.

Tittle, Ernest Fremont, *The Lord's Prayer*, Abingdon-Cokesbury, Nashville, 1942.

### **Luther and the Lord's Prayer**

Luther dealt with the Lord's Prayer frequently, but all his expositions are not accessible, or easily accessible, in English. The following have been quoted in these studies:

*The Lord's Prayer Said Forwards and Backwards* (1519), in *Luther Primer*, by Albert T. W. Steinhäuser, Survey Publishing Co., Columbia, S. C., 1917, pp. 13-16.

*German Exposition of the Lord's Prayer for Simple Laymen* (1519); not translated into English.

*A Brief Explanation of the Ten Commandments, The Creed, and the Lord's Prayer* (1520); in *Works of Martin Luther*, Holman edition, Philadelphia, Vol. II, pp. 351 ff.

*Large Catechism* (1529); quoted from *The Book of Concord*, Jacobs ed. Available in separate edition, *Luther's Large Catechism*, Augsburg Publishing House, 1935.

*Small Catechism* (1529); Available in many editions. Quoted from *Luther's Small Catechism* (1529) 1929 (*A New English Translation Prepared by an Intersynodical Committee*), Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1929.

*The Lord's Prayer Paraphrased* (1538-39?); English by C. Winkworth in *The Hymns of Martin Luther*, Scribners, New York, 1883.

A prose paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer can be found in *The German Mass and Order of Service* (1526), *Works*, Holman ed., Vol. VI, pp. 180 ff., and an excellent discussion of evangelical prayer is contained in the *Treatise on Good Works*, Holman ed., Vol. I, pp. 221-40.

With the exception of the prayer at the end of the first chapter, by C. M. Jacobs (*Helps on the Road*, p. 73), the prayers at the end of each chapter, which help us to "pray the Catechism" as Luther often suggested, are the work of Albert T. W. Steinhäuser ("Luther's Small Catechism as a Manual of Devotion," *Lutheran Church Review*, XLV, 3 [July 1926], pp. 277 ff.).







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